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ABSTRACT

This guide discusses material selection criteria for those who teach English reading skills to adult non-English speakers. It is argued that in order to achieve a grasp of meaning in a second language, the student must have some experience with the culture from which that meaning arises. For the selection of material, a checklist of American culture is presented, in which five specific short stories are identified as dealing with or ignoring such aspects of American culture as social equality, economic competitiveness, meeting basic needs, and social structure. Two of the readings, the texts for which are not included, are then made the focus of lesson plans in which student response to cultural considerations raised by the stories is elicited. Appendices include: (1) a bibliography, (2) excerpts from a report on a test for comparative readability of five passages from English classics, (3) records of readability counts of the five short stories, and (4) the Dale list of 769 easy words. (JB)

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A Cultural Checklist

a technique for selecting reading materials for foreign students

By Walter P. Allen
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INTRODUCTION

During the war one of the graduates of the English Department at Huachung University was unable to get a job as translator at the Kunming Branch of the U.S. Office of War Information. The O.W.I. said that the girl did not know enough English for the job. She was the best student in the department and she had just written a thesis based on some English novels, but was not able to translate American press releases.

This girl's sad experience while job hunting graphically pointed up a problem which had been of concern to me for some time. The materials used in the English courses, especially the assigned readings, did not provide a background for understanding current uses of the language. The problem of the present study is to find a technique for selecting English language reading materials which will provide people from other lands with background for understanding the language.

Analysis of the problem led to the theory that language derives its meaning from the situations, or the contexts, in which it is used. To a native speaker of a language, these situations form his daily life, but a person from another country has experiences set in a different cultural pattern. In order to learn a second language, a person must have experience in situations which give meaning to this second language. In order to teach meanings, the language teacher must provide actual or vicarious experience which will give the context of the words.

For the present study, the problem of providing this context was narrowed in several respects. The suggested materials are literary, with no mention of 'audio-visual' aids. The lessons are for students with several years of English study, not for the beginners. The study is concerned with the development of the recognition vocabulary and not with the development of the

production vocabulary which is another necessary part of the language teaching art. Consideration of writing techniques and esthetic aspects of literature are outside the scope of the study. Needless to say, such a limitation does not mean that expanding the production vocabulary, learning writing techniques, and studying esthetic aspects of literature will be omitted from the English language course, but the present project is concentrated on selection of material which will help students understand modern English.

Although the study of the problem arose from a specific situation, it led to an inquiry into the cultural basis of meaning, and then to application of theory in lesson plans. Thus a technique worked out to solve a problem in a Chinese university has resulted in a technique which may be applied to any language learning situation, such as learning French or Spanish in American schools.

W. P. A.
1948

Introduction to the Second Edition

Twenty-five years after the original writing of *Selecting Reading Materials*, the question of a revision has been raised by ELS. The revision of any work brings two major questions: How much is still good and how much needs to be changed?

After carefully re-reading the book, I was impressed by two things: how strong the theory still was after a quarter century full of radical developments in linguistics, and how greatly our life in the United States has changed in that same time. Contextual orientation, either actual or vicarious, still is needed in the learning of a second language. Phrase-structure rules, tree diagrams, embedding, tagmemes, and stratificational theories have not really affected this aspect of language learning. On the other hand, our life has changed considerably. In 1948 I felt justified in recommending Sinclair Lewis' *Babbitt* as a picture of contemporary American life; but now, though I still use it in a class with foreign students, it is very definitely history.

The basic form of the Cultural Checklist remains the same, though I have made minor changes, such as removing streetcars, trains, and ships from the modes of transportation. The stories present a different problem. They have lost their up-to-date quality so soon that I know the same fate would befall any new selection made today. At the same time, these stories are not recommended as the best or only set of materials for providing vicarious contextual orientation, but only as demonstrations of what to look for. Therefore the stories from the first edition have been retained and only one new one has been added. Of more use to the teacher looking for material will be the updating of the sources for new stories in the Bibliography. As each student, each class, and each teacher is different, different sets of stories will be most satisfying in different contexts.

Besides providing an opportunity for the two major considerations, a revision also makes possible a few minor changes. The importance of the Cultural Checklist has been stressed by the new title and by presenting the Checklist in a more useful format for working on other stories. Dale's List of Easy Words has been added, making it easier to carry out the readability checks. Finally, I trust the reduction in the number of footnotes will be satisfactory to all.

W.P.A.
Houston
1973

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Most of the credit for what is good in the following study of a technique for selecting literature for foreign students of English belongs to others who have assisted in its development. My interest in the problem of selecting reading materials in teaching English as a second language was aroused by experiences at Huachung University in China. The direction I have taken in solving the problem was indicated by the writings of Dr. Charles C. Fries. I am particularly indebted to his chapter on 'Contextual Orientation' in *Teaching English as a Foreign Language*.

Several of the faculty of Teachers College, Columbia University, gave much friendly advice and criticism, including Dr. Donald G. Tewksbury, Dr. Lennox Grey, Dr. Ida A. Jewett, Dr. Irving Lorge, and last, but certainly not least, Dr. Aileen T. Kitchin. Dr. Kitchin assisted, guided, corrected, and encouraged the work from the start. Her insight into the problems in the field and her personal interest in the progress of the study were a constant source of inspiration.

Letters from Dr. Margaret Mead, Dr. Martin B. Loeb, and Dr. George P. Murdock referred me to useful sources of material which assisted in the building of the checklist for American culture. Fellow students in the English seminars at Teachers College were helpful in pointing out weak spots in planning and in argument.

For two and a half years my wife had to put up with continuous discussion on the bases of meaning, readability scales, anthropological views on culture patterns, and the suitability of various stories for the present study. She contributed many ideas and made many helpful suggestions for straightening out involved sentences.

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CHAPTER I

THE BASIS OF MEANING

MEANING IS LEARNED THROUGH EXPERIENCE

The sounds used in speech result from an arbitrary social selection; they have no meaning in and of themselves. English *bread*, French *pain*, and Chinese *mien*ˋ-paoˇ mean somewhat similar wheat products for reasons other than the sounds which make up these words. As Bloomfield points out, speech is only a part of the meaning situation, which consists of (a) Events preceding the act of speech; (b) Speech; and (c) Events following the act of speech.[1]

In order to know the meaning of the speech utterance, therefore, the context must be known. The context includes not only the immediate situation but also past experiences with the words used. Speech alone, lifted from its context, has no meaning. This fact is well illustrated by Malinowski when he translates a Trobriand sentence as nearly as possible into English equivalents, the resulting translation being an unintelligible jumble of words. This is the sentence, with the English equivalents printed below the Trobriand words:

Tasakaulo kaymatana yakida; tawoulo ovanu;
We run front-wood ourselves; we paddle in place;

tasivila tagine soda; isakaulo ka'u'uya
we turn we see companion ours; he runs rear-wood

oluvieki similaveta Pilolu.
behind their sea-arm Pilolu.

[1] Leonard Bloomfield, *Language* (New York: Holt, 1933), p. 23.

Malinowski shows how he had to understand the Trobriand culture before he could understand this sentence. He concludes that all language is 'essentially rooted in the reality of the culture, the tribal life and customs of a people, and that it cannot be explained without constant reference to these broader contexts of verbal utterance.'[2]

De Laguna says the same thing in different words when she states:

> Language never completely loses its dependence on *context*. The sentence is indeed a complete unit, but it does not stand alone. What happens is that a *language* context comes more and more to take the place of *perceptual* context. The essential thing that is to be said needs to be led up to by introductory remarks which give it a setting. Yet spoken language is never wholly freed from its perceived context and accompaniments....[3]

This context, this reality of the culture, is not all learned through direct experience. Some meanings are learned through substitute experience. We are able to widen our experience through the medium of language by listening to others or by reading of their discoveries. However, the words through which we receive this substitute experience 'have meaning for us only in so far as...they...are attached to situations which we have already known.'[4] There is a steady progression from the direct to the substitute experience. Students of a second language should be led from *pencil* and *chalk* on through *school* and *home* before they try to understand *democracy* and *education*.

Since the meanings of words depend on the contexts in which they are used, we can learn these meanings through experience, direct or indirect, of these contexts. The way in which

[2]Bronislaw Malinowski, "The Problem of Meaning in Primitive Languages," Supplement I in C.K. Ogden and I.A. Richards, *Meaning of Meaning* (7th ed.; New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1945), pp. 300-305.

[3]Grace Andrus de Laguna, *Speech: Its Function and Development* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1927), p. 108.

[4]Aileen Traver Kitchin, "On the Teaching of the English Language," *Teachers College Record*, 49:3 (December 1947), p. 166.

a child learns the meanings of words, moving from the general to the particular, shows this progress in action. At first *da-da* may mean any person. Later on the meaning of this word becomes particularized through the way the child hears the word used and the results he gets when he uses it. Thus he learns that *da-da* cannot be applied to his mother, and so it becomes the term for all men, and later it is restricted to one particular man. Experience has built in the meaning.

In the history of the language, changes in the meaning of words are in part brought about by changes from one context to another. This semantic change is illustrated by the word *meat*. In the King James translation of the Bible *meat* is used with the meaning now connected with the word *food*. Since 1611 *meat* has been used more and more for 'edible part of animal body' rather than the broader meaning of 'edible thing.' Thus the older meaning has been used less and less until it has slowly been dropped. As Bloomfield states: "We can easily see today that a change in the meaning of a speech-form is merely the result of a change in the use of it...." (pp. 425-428).

Language in turn reacts on experience by aiding its organization into systems, as well as itself growing out of experience. Through a verbal classification of events man takes advantage of his past experience in his plans and hypotheses. Fries sums up these relations between language and experience when he says:

> Our language is an essential part of every portion of our experience; it gets all its meaning from our experience, and it is in turn our tool to grasp and realize experience. Every language is thus inextricably bound up with the whole life experience of the native users of that language.[5]

EXPERIENCE IS NEEDED FOR MEANING

When implications from the view that meaning is based on experience are carried over to the learning of a second language,

[5]Charles Carpenter Fries, *Teaching and Learning English as a Foreign Language* (Publications of the English Language Institute, No. 1; Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1945), p. 57.

it is seen that the students need experience to get meanings. Mere translation into native terms will not give a grasp of the second language, because the cultural situations differ. The Chinese word *shang`* is often translatable as *above* or *upper*, but in the expression *shang`-lou´* it must be translated *go up* (stairs). The Chinese student needs experience to guide him in finding the correct English word for translating *shang`*. Similarly, the word *lou´* used in the above expression generally means *tower* or *story* (in a building), but in the expression *shang`-lou´* it must be translated *stairs*. To get the meanings of the words of a language, students need familiarity with the whole life experience of native users of the language. When it is impossible to achieve this through direct experience, some substitute experience must be provided which will give the cultural basis for meanings.

As the present study is aimed at the selection of reading matter for students learning English as a second language, the very valuable aids available in audio-visuals will not be mentioned. Obviously, talking and silent motion pictures, slides, and recordings will be of great use to the teacher in setting the context of language.

However, this substitute experiential background may be acquired through a study of selected works of literature, works chosen for their honesty in depicting the culture and their scope in covering wide sections of it. Literature is thus seen to be a tool for gaining substitute experience in a second culture.

Before the teacher turns to literature as a source for teaching meaning, he should consider the following statement of McGalliard:

> For the linguist, as we have seen, language is a form of human behavior to be scientifically examined. For the creator and the critic of literature, it is the medium of an art. Although the scientific grammarian and the literary critic devote their attention to the same works of prose and poetry, their purposes and methods are different. The linguist may give the closest study to Beowulf, Racine, or Sinclair Lewis.

> He does so in order to determine the facts about some features of the English or French language.... The student of literature, on the other hand, is interested in language only as the vehicle of literary creation. In order to read literature, however, he must first master the language in which it is written.[6]

McGalliard says that real dangers lurk in this situation, because the linguist may blot out the literary art and so pieces of literature may become cadavers for scientific discussion. He says there should be room for both the linguistic and the literary and esthetic studies. He suggests that the linguistics could come first, but always as a means to an end. "The two functions, of course, may be used to supplement each other; but they should not be merely mixed in confusion." (pp. 85-86).

[6]John C. McGalliard, "Language" in Norman Foerster, *et. al., Literary Scholarship; Its Aims and Methods* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1941), p. 85.

CHAPTER II

SELECTION OF MATERIAL

POINTS OF SUBJECTIVE SELECTION

After the teacher has studied the needs of his class and understood the method by which meanings are established, he is faced with the problem of selecting the proper reading materials to fit both the students and the method. Most of the needs of the students relate to current uses of English: reading periodicals, listening to lectures, enjoying movies, understanding radio and TV, writing reports and term papers, and doing business. To prepare a student for these activities, the study of English must be based on recent writing. As McGalliard points out:

> It is indisputably true that the language of any period is a transient integration of sounds, forms, conventions of word order, and symbol-associations (word meanings). Each age has its own integration, in which the associations of a word stand in a unique relationship to the association of other words (p. 87).

The geographical location of the culture must also be determined. As the English language is the native tongue in several areas around the world, the meanings of words vary from place to place, because the experiences which give meanings are different. Thus different courses would be set up for British English, Canadian English, American English, Australian English, and South African English. The students will be least confused if only one type of English is presented to them. The teacher will be best prepared to teach that division of English with which he is familiar. For these reasons, American English has been taken

as the field for this project.

With the materials to be used narrowed to recent American literature, only the first step in the process of selection is taken. Next, the types of literary work suitable for the students should be considered. Short stories give good pictures of present day conditions; and the amount of reading involved is convenient for single lessons. Short stories are thus a good source of materials for this course. Another type of literature which gives a much broader picture of our culture is the novel. This broad base is necessary to make the cultural patterns stand out in their perspective, so that novels will be very useful in providing cultural background for learning English. Plays are an equally good source of much material on current life, but students of a second language find that dialog is difficult to understand. Plays must therefore be reserved for more advanced students or those who have had special training in conversational patterns. Biography is often at least a generation behind, so that it is not current. History is also likely to depict earlier times. The condensed language and imagery of poetry depend for much of their effect on a knowledge of the experiences which give the words meaning, and such condensed poetry is thus not suitable for helping to teach these meanings to under-classmen. Much poetry violates common sentence patterns and uses archaic words, which again present difficulties to foreign students learning English. Even a simple poem such as Robert Louis Stevenson's "When I Go to Bed at Night," mentions going to bed by candlelight, which is not a common experience in America today. Poems which avoid the difficulties to foreign students mentioned above may be used, but much searching must be done to select a group of such poems. Essays may be about current situations, but they do not represent the living situations from which native speakers of the language learn meanings. The teacher can therefore limit his search to short stories and novels.

In attempting to give the students substitute experiences which are the common basis for meaning, the teacher must avoid the unusual, the exceptions. Most literary heroes, however, are exceptions. Therefore the teacher must search recent

American literature for material which illustrates the common patterns, even the stereotypes, because they are the basis for common meanings. Novels solely of protest and revolt are thus eliminated, because they presuppose knowledge of the culture as it is. Similarly, regional deviations from the general culture cannot be appreciated until the common patterns are known. To help the teacher find literary works which contain these common patterns and experiences, a checklist was devised. The construction of this checklist is described below.

Having narrowed his selection of material subjectively on the points of time, place, types of literature, and common patterns, the teacher is ready to apply more objective tests of cultural content and readability.

A CHECKLIST FOR AMERICAN CULTURE

The checklist which follows presents an organized tabulation of experiences against which a book or story may be evaluated for the areas of American culture that it depicts. Five short stories have been checked to demonstrate the use of the checklist. A certain weighting has been given to some cultural patterns because the checklist was developed as an aid in selecting books for Chinese students, so that special emphasis has been laid on some of the differences between our two cultures.

The checklist was based originally on the list in Fries, *Teaching and Learning English as a Foreign Language* (pp. 58-60), which itemizes experiences that give meaning to our language. An adaptation of this list, which I prepared during the summer of 1947, was used as a guide in determining areas of American culture covered in a group of selected books. I found that such a checklist revealed the books which most widely depicted our cultural patterns, but it did not give sufficiently complete coverage of American culture.

At this point it was decided that such a checklist should be based on principles which guide anthropologists, so that the resulting checklist would provide a sound method for selecting

books for teaching English as a second language. The ideal manner of forming such a cultural checklist would be to compare parallel anthropological studies of American and the students' cultures, drawing from this comparison points of similarity and of difference. Since most cultures have not been studied comprehensively by anthropologists, such procedure is impossible. The checklist which follows was compiled in the light of what the writer knows of American and Chinese cultures. Books by Benedict, Boas, Linton, and Mead[1] were culled for behavioral elements which attract the attention of anthropologists, and then these elements were arranged under the three general headings suggested by Boas in *General Anthropology* (p. 4).

A study of American literature was investigated for additional elements which were not found in anthropological studies of Indians and South Sea Islanders. Further research was made for a more complete over-all pattern and additional reading was done to fill the gaps in certain sections. The most helpful guide to such a checklist was discovered last: Murdock's *Outline of Cultural Materials.* Since the checklist which follows was practically completed at the time this work was found, Murdock's *Outline* was used chiefly to check for omissions. The checklist was also presented to the English Department seminar and was revised in the light of criticisms received there.

The checklist is based on an anthropological index, but it is arranged as an outline in an attempt to bring out the cultural patterning. Thus in part the checklist is an analytical outline. The outline form is complete where there is evidence to support it, but at many points it is incomplete, with only brief indications of what should come under the headings. Other details may be added when they become apparent through use of the checklist in selecting reading materials.

The first major division of the checklist attempts to bring out some of the general configurations in American culture. If a book does not depict American life in these patterns, it may be rejected as not truly representative. Divisions II and III list

[1]See the "Checklist" section of the Bibliography for the books used in the compilation of the checklist.

experiences in our culture. The fourth division treats of values in American culture.

Among the problems encountered in setting up this checklist was that of finding the basis of classification. It is difficult to determine the arbitrary lines on which to divide a culture which is a whole, and complex experiences do not easily fit under one heading. A further problem was to keep the checklist to a manageable size and at the same time specific enough to be of use. The result is not presented as a guide to anthorpological investigations, but it should prove to be a convenient tool for selecting language teaching materials.

When the teacher has selected a literary work by the subjective methods outlined in the first part of this chapter, he reads the work carefully and marks on the checklist the points which are mentioned. For a short story of a few pages, simple check marks are sufficient indication that the experiences listed are found in the story. For longer passages and novels, the teacher will find it wise to indicate the page in the book where the experience is located.

Once a story has been checked, the teacher has a tool which he can put to several uses. The checklist helps identify the intensity with which the cultural patterns are brought out. The more intense the description is, the more points will be checked, and new points will continue to be brought out to the end of the story. The checklist also reveals extensiveness in the checks for many patterns. It reveals which areas of our culture are covered.

The teacher can look at his checklist to see if the story covers the same points which have been described in other stories or whether new areas of experience are revealed. This will be made easier if the checks for the stories read are made in parallel columns, a column for each story. This will show which points have been fully illustrated and need no longer be discussed in class, as well as the blanks in the cultural picture which have not yet been filled. Thus the checklist is an aid first of all in selection of material.

The checklist also helps the teacher in preparing for his

class by showing him the points which the story covers. He can see which points will be new to his class and those with which they will already be familiar. He can pick out parallel experiences or descriptions which he can ask the class to compare.

The checklist may remind the teacher of differences between the American and other cultures which he asks the class to discuss. The checklist brings out the general cultural patterns which the American teacher may take for granted and thus permit the class to overlook. The teacher can use the checklist to look for special points which the class could deal with best in written lessons.

Other uses will evolve as the teacher becomes aware of further possibilities in the checklist. It is an aid to the teacher both in selecting lesson material and in formulating the lesson plans for teaching that material. The user of the checklist must keep constantly in mind the anthropological basis of the list. It is objective and not evaluative. Although it stresses points of difference between the American and Chinese cultures it must not be used as a basis for juding either culture.

The list which follows has been checked to show the patterns which are mentioned in the stories used in the two lesson plans and the first two stories listed under "Extension to Other Materials" (see Chapter III). The numbers at the tops of the columns refer to these stories:

I—Martha Foley, "One with Shakespeare"
II—Michael Fessier, "That's What Happened to Me"
III—Elsie Singmaster, "Mr. Brownlee's Roses"
IV—Mary E. Wilkins Freeman, "The Revolt of 'Mother' "
V—Peter De Vries, "A Cold Potato"[2]

[2]See "Stories Mentioned" section of the Bibliography.

A CHECKLIST FOR AMERICAN CULTURE

	I	II	III	IV	V
I. General patterns in American culture					
A. Developing maximum potentialities of the individual	x	x	x	x	
1. Acquiring pecuniary power		x	x	x	
2. Climbing the ladder of success	x	x	x	x	x
3. Seeking adventure		x	x		
4. Taking the initiative	x	x	x	x	x
5. Competing with others		x			x
6. Protecting individual rights					
B. Equalizing opportunities for all	x	x	x	x	
1. Conforming with the group		x	x	x	x
2. Seeking social equality		x	x	x	x
3. Forcing economic equality					
4. Using political equality					
5. Practicing philanthropy					
6. Cooperating with the group	x				

		I	II	III	IV	V
II.	Man and nature					
	A. Food					
	1. Farming				x	
	2. Processing					
	3. Marketing					
	4. Eating					
	a. How many meals					
	b. At what times	x			x	
	c. What is eaten	x		x	x	x
	d. What is drunk				x	
	e. Seating at meals					
	f. Spoken formulas at meals				x	
	g. Use of eating utensils					
	5. Drinking					x
	B. Shelter					
	1. Dwellings		x	x	x	x
	a. Uses of various parts				x	x

	I	II	III	IV	V
b. Furnishings for each			x	x	x
c. Plumbing and heating			x	x	x
d. Conventions of cleanliness	x	x	x	x	x
2. Non-residential buildings	x	x	x	x	x
C. Clothing					
1. Men's clothing		x		x	x
2. Women's clothing	x		x	x	
3. Urban and rural clothing				x	
4. Formal and informal clothing		x			
D. Transportation	x		x		x
1. Vehicles for transportation					
a. Cars and taxis		x			x
b. Subways and busses	x				
c. Trucks and railroads			x		
d. Airplanes					x
2. Volume of traffic					
3. Frequency of travel	x				x

	I	II	III	IV	V
E. Technology					
1. Use of mechanical inventions			x		x
2. Use of scientific processes			x		
F. Man and animals					
1. Useful animals				x	
2. Pets					x
3. Treatment of animals				x	x
G. Climate			x		
1. Avoiding extremes			x	x	
2. Preserving food					
III. Man and man					
A. Social structure					
1. Family groups			x	x	x
a. Family organization			x	x	x
i. Size and relationships			x	x	x
ii. Marriage, divorce, remarriage				x	

	I	II	III	IV	V
iii. Line of descent			x		
b. Parents					
i. Husband-wife relations				x	x
ii. Extra-marital relations					
iii. Parent-child relations	x		x	x	
c. Children					
i. Relations to adult world	x	x	x		
ii. Formulas of address	x		x	x	
iii. Relation to other children	x	x	x		
iv. Forms and spirit of play		x		x	
v. Stress on physical skills		x			
vi. School experiences	x	x	x	x	
vii. Stories for children	x				
viii. Songs for children					
d. Adolescents					
i. Time of stress and revolt	x	x	x		

	I	II	III	IV	V
a. Sex differences and relations					
i. Differences in childhood training					
ii. Adolescent social relations		x			
iii. Conventions of modesty			x		
iv. Areas of supervision and freedom			x		
v. Courtship and marriage				x	
vi. Areas of dominance of each sex				x	
f. The aged					
i. Care for the aged in families		x			
ii. The aged in institutions					
iii. The aged who live alone					
2. Social groups					
a. Class levels		x			
i. Owners			x		
ii. Managers					
iii. Laborers		x	x	x	
iv. Professional groups	x	x		x	x

	I	II	III	IV	V
v. Groups outside the social structure					
vi. Consciousness of class levels		x			x
vii. Language of various class levels				x	
h. Race and nationality groups	x		x		x
i. Social position of cultural groups		x	x		
ii. Intercultural relations					
e. Religion					
i. Protestants, Catholics, Jews				x	
ii. Church attendance					
iii. Baptism, marriage, burial					
iv. Holidays and festivals					
v. Intergroup relations					
vi. Superstition					
d. Societies and associations					
i. Business men's clubs					
ii. Fraternal orders		x			
iii. Veterans' groups					

	I	II	III	IV	V
iv. Women's clubs					
v. Informal associations					
3. Community units					
a. Scattered farm communities				x	
b. Small towns		x	x	x	
c. Suburbs					x
d. Metropolitan centers	x				
4. Leisure time activities					
a. Motor activities					
i. Enjoying the out-of-doors	x			x	
ii. Participating in sports		x			
iii. Practicing handicrafts					x
iv. Dancing and social games		x	x		x
b. Sensory activities					
i. Watching sports events		x			
ii. Plays and movies					
iii. Operas and concerts					

	I	II	III	IV	V
iv. Radio and TV					
e. Intellectual activities					
i. Reading	x				
ii. Doing club work					
iii. Playing cards					
5. Language formulas and gestures				x	x
a. In stores		x			
b. Casual meeting	x		x		
c. Informal parties					
d. Formal receptions					
e. Greetings and leave takings					
f. Shaking hands		x			
g. Introductions			x		
h. Differences of ceremoniousness in different social groups				x	
B. Economic structure		30			
1. Schemes of ownership			x		

	I	II	III	IV	V
a. Means of acquisition		x	x	x	
b. Personal holdings					
2. Economic exchange					
a. Position of trade			x		
b. Position of business leaders		x			
3. Employment			x		
a. Types of work	x	x	x	x	x
i. Work of adolescents		x	x	x	
b. Preparation for work	x		x		
c. Areas of choice and compulsion			x		
d. Amount of pay and security					
i. Attutude toward pay		x			
ii. Attitude toward advancement		x			
4. Labor organizations					
a. Attitudes of workers					
b. Attitudes of others					
5. Social service work					

	I	II	III	IV	V
C. Political structure					
1. Democracy		x			
a. Elections					
b. Personal freedom					
c. Police					
2. Political parties					
a. Major parties	x				
b. Liberals and radicals	x				
c. Political morals					
3. International affairs					
a. Relations with world groups					
b. War and peace					
D. Educational system					
1. Primary schools	x	x			
a. Teachers (sex, age, training)					
b. Boys and girls together					
c. Subjects studied					

	I	II	III	IV	V
2. Secondary schools	x	x	x		
a. Teachers	x	x			
b. Coeducation		x			
c. Subjects studied	x	x	x		
d. Social life at school		x			
3. Higher education	x				
a. College studies					
b. Campus life					
4. Newspapers and magazines			x		
5. Radio and television					
6. Adult education					
IV. Values in the culture					
A. Social values					
1. Sanctity of the individual		x	x		x
2. Leveling and cooperation		x	x		x
B. Emotional tone					

	I	II	III	IV	V
1. Ways of showing emotion	x	x		x	x
2. Times of showing emotion		x	x	x	x
C. Religious tone					
1. Importance in daily life				x	
D. Ethical values					
1. Ideas of right and wrong			x	x	x
2. Attitude toward obeying laws					
3. Attitude toward war, homicide, suicide					
E. Areas of taboo					
1. Areas of silence					x
2. Attitude toward profanity		x			
F. Esthetic values	x				
1. Public taste in art					x
2. Attitude toward artists					

THE UTILITY OF READABILITY SCALES

Many teachers hope for assistance from readability scales which indicate the ease or difficulty of reading material through the working of a mathematical formula. The makers of these scales have tried to find a minimum of countable factors which are influential in determining readability. These scales have been derived from different materials for different purposes. Gray and Leary[3] were primarily interested in poor adult readers in the United States who speak English but have never picked up the reading habit. Lewerenz is interested in books for use in schools. Lorge approached the problem from the use of reading tests. Flesch studied the factors of readability in popular magazines. The aim and basis of work for each readability rating must be kept in mind when it is used.

The makers of these readability scales are the first to warn against blanket application of the ratings to all types of reading matter. For example, on this point Lorge states:

> It is obvious that the purpose of the reader in reading and the kinds of questions asked in estimating reading comprehension will influence greatly the estimate of reading difficulty.... The Lorge formula... tends to underestimate the difficulty of passages to be read primarily for specific details or for following directions.... As an estimate, it should not be considered definitive nor used blindly (p. 407).

In an earlier passage in the same article, Lorge states that in working on readability scores one must assume that variations in people's interests and purposes in reading are balanced (p. 404). In actual practice, of course, these variations fluctuate considerably.

From these facts it is seen that in using a readability rating, one must consider the group of people from whom the rating was developed, the degree of interest in the reading matter, and also the purpose of the reader. When any of these,

[3]See "Readability" section of Bibliography for identification of books referred to.

and possibly other, variables change, the readability scale is inaccurate.

When selecting reading materials for students who are learning English as a second language, a person is inclined to consider these readability scales as Heaven-sent aids. A consideration of the points outlined above, however, gives a warning of probable inaccuracy if the readability rating is applied to materials for studying English as a second language. The problems of a group of students who are learning English are different from those of poor adult readers who speak English natively, are different from those of American school children, and are different from those of the general reading public which buys the slick paper magazines. This group of students learning English also will approach an English passage with a different purpose from that of people searching for an easy novel, from that of American children studying a concentrated reading test or preparing for a report on outside reading, or from that of people seeking relaxation in a love story or mystery thriller.

In the light of this situation, it was decided to conduct an experiment which would indicate whether students learning English as a second language agreed subjectively with a readability rating on selected passages. It was decided to select the passages from books which had been frequently used in the freshman and sophomore English classes at Huachung University.

Using the Lorge formula, several passages were tested till a group of five was secured with readability ratings ranging from 5.4 to 8.8 on a scale representing grades in school. Each passage was mimeographed on a separate piece of paper. The persons participating in the experiment were to arrange the papers in the order of difficulty and mark on a covering sheet which passage they considered the easiest, which the second easiest, and so to the fifth and most difficult. In order that the persons tested would not be influenced by anything except the actual passage read, the names of the authors and of the books were omitted from the test sheets. The passages used in the test are

to be found in Appendix A.

This test was administered to the students in the classes for foreign students at Teachers College in May, 1947. It was also given to students in a class on the teaching of English as a second language. The results of the test show that the order of difficulty, as determined by this subjective method, shows little correlation with the readability rating according to the Lorge formula[4]. It is possible that variations in interest accounted for the differences in rating, but it is probable that other factors also entered to change the order. As stated earlier in the present chapter, a variation was to be expected. It is seen in this instance that the Lorge Readability Index is not useful in grading something for which it was not constructed: reading materials for non-native speakers of English. A passage with an R.I. (Readability Index) of 5.4 was subjectively marked as being very difficult, while one with an R.I. of 7.7 was considered the easiest. However the passage with an R.I. of 8.8, the highest index of the five passages, was also considered the most difficult in the subjective rating. The experiment suggests that the Lorge (and other) readability scales are not consistent in indicating the readability of a passage for students to whom English is a second language. The readability index is seen to be far from infallible in determining difficulty of texts for foreign students.

The problem of selecting and grading reading materials for these students remains. It was decided to search for the elements which may have caused difficulty to non-native speakers of English. A list was made of possible predictors, and then a score for each was computed for the five passages, and these scores were then compared with the subjective ratings given the passages.

The elements considered were the number of words per sentence, the ratio of different hard words (words not in Dale's list of 769 easy words),[5] the ratio of personal pronouns, the ratio of dependent clauses, the number of auxiliary verbs, the

[4]See summary of results of this test in the table in Appendix A.

[5]See Appendix C.

ratio of two-word verbs[6], the ratio of variations from the subject-verb-complement (NP + VTr + NP) sentence pattern, and the amount of dialog.

Incomplete as this experiment is, it does give some guidance in judging readability of material for students who do not speak English natively. The most important factor is the difficulty of vocabulary. If over a quarter of the words in any passage are words not found on Dale's list, the passage will probably be difficult, whereas if these hard words represent less than a fifth of the total number of words, the passage will probably be easy. (The ratio of hard words is one of the three predictors used by Lorge.) Again, a frequent use of two-word verbs may indicate difficulty for readers who are native speakers of another language. Although long sentences do not appear to be directly related to difficulty in reading, the variations or interruptions from the subject-verb-complement pattern seem to be closely related to the difficulty of a passage. A fourth factor which affects readability for non-native speakers of Englist is the amount of dialog. The more dialog—especially of the short, fragmentary sentence type—the more difficult the passage is likely to be. Since only one of the passages used in the test contained dialect, the test cannot be used to measure the difficulty to foreign students of reading matter containing dialect, but experience gained during the teaching of English at Huachung University suggests that dialect also adds to the difficulty of the reading. Interest is very important, but is as yet unmeasurable.

Thus the number of hard words, the variations in the structural pattern, and the amount of dialog and dialect may be considered as important factors which make reading material difficult for people who are not native speakers of English. These factors are considered in the stories used in the lesson plans which follow.

[6]In the same way that the Latin word from which we derive *exclaim* was a combination of two words (*ex* and *clamare*), *call out* is an English two-word verb. Some others are *show off*, *throw out*, *try out*, *have to*, and *write down*.

CHAPTER III

LESSON PLANS

NOTES ON LESSON PLANS

The following lesson plans are examples of the application of the foregoing theory. These plans show how the teacher can help to give his students experiences which will bring meaning to the words they learn. The lesson plans are limited to the study of cultural patterns revealed in literature; they do not attempt to deal with plot, style, and other literary or esthetic phases of the stories under discussion.

SELECTION

The short stories upon which the lesson plans are based were selected after extensive reading and careful testing. Subjective opinion is backed by objective testing against the checklist and with readability factors. Titles of short story collections were culled from special bibliographies and the selected volumes were inspected for short stories suitable for the purpose of this project.

Stories were sought which would give the students substitute experience in special areas, such as the school and the home. These stories, it was thought, should represent usual rather than unusual situations and backgrounds. They should present pictures of sections of American life rather than character studies which take the American background for granted. The stories should reflect some of the general patterns of American life, as well as portray experiences in limited areas.

After the stories were selected according to the subjective

standards outlined above, they were examined for extent and intensity of checklist coverage. The next step was to check their readability. One, two, or three sample pages were selected according to the length of the story. The words on each page, excluding parts of sentences extending from the previous page or running onto the following page, were counted, and the number written on the record card. Then the different hard words (those not appearing on Dale's list of 769 easy words) were counted and recorded. The same was done with the number of structural variations from the subject-verb-complement sentence pattern and with the number of words in dialog. Then the total of each item for the several samples in a story was found. Ratios for each item were found by dividing the total number of different hard words, the total number of structural variations, and the total number of words in dialog, each by the total number of words in the samples. The resulting figures do not give a readability index, but they do provide objective scores which help in determining whether the story will be easy or difficult. The counts made for the stories in the accompanying lesson plans will be found in Appendix B.

Since these counts do not take into consideration the presence or absence of non-standard dialect, a scale from 1 (none) to 5 (much) was used and the amount of dialect was scored subjectively. The dialect scale was made a part of the record cards mentioned above.

Application

The following lesson plans are divided into four sections. Each section is designed to give certain aids to the teacher in conducting his class. The following are some suggestions for using the lesson plans.

Checklist Coverage

The section of the lesson plans labeled "Checklist Coverage" shows which of the American culture patterns are touched

upon in the story. Determining the checklist coverage is a beginning step in formulating the class work. Such a check against the cultural patterns enables the teacher to appraise the story as to its value in giving experience to his students and the areas in which it gives experience. It helps him determine which patterns he can teach most effectively, and it brings out the variety of patterns covered in a story. For longer stories and novels it is advisable to note the pages where the various experiences illustrating the patterns are found, but in short stories this is not necessary.

The checklist coverage section is a working aid to the teacher. It helps him determine whether he wishes to use the story, what to emphasize in the class, and how much of the culture is covered.

Assignment

Homework should be for review purposes and not for the study of new phases of the subject. A reading assignment, therefore, raises some problems, because reading the complete passage in class eliminates time for discussion of it, and discussion of the passage is more satisfactory when the class has some idea of what is being discussed. To overcome these difficulties, the teacher can explain to the class the general plot of the story, telling who the chief character is and the general line of action. He can especially help the students to understand the situation at the beginning of the passage. A student of a second language often has difficulty in gaining such orientation, and an understanding of the context of situation is necessary to the understanding of the words. For example, a student of French who has been told that Act I, Scene 1 of *Cyrano* portrays a crowd gathering to see a play can read with much greater understanding than a student who has been told, "Read Act 1 for Tuesday."

Again, the teacher can explain some of the language difficulties which the students will encounter. The difficulties may be in the sentence structure or unusual word order. They may be special vocabulary or dialect problems.

The teacher can also ask the class to be on the lookout for certain experiences which give meaning to some words. The students should be asked to watch for the general cultural pattern which the story illustrates or for the particular phase of the culture which is pictured.

The assignments as written below are in the form of the teacher's words to the students. They are, however, to serve only as guides. When the teacher is standing before his class giving the assignment, he will necessarily expand some parts which the students do not seem to understand, he will answer their questions, and he will make other changes to suit the circumstances.

Materials

Under this topic are included those items which help to add vividness and reality to the substitute experiences which the students get from reading. The use of films in connection with teaching literature as experience was not studied for this project, the reasons for which are given in Chapter I, above.

Some experiences may best be demonstrated with the aid of models. Children's toys may serve in some instances. In other cases the class may enjoy constructing a model.

The most frequently used materials to aid in teaching literature will be pictures. These may be purchased specifically to illustrate certain stories, or they may be gathered from various sources and filed for future need. The most useful system of filing is one that corresponds with the checklist divisions. If pictures are kept in envelopes labeled according to the headings of the checklist, the teacher can use the checklist coverage list to indicate where he will find pictures pertinent to the story. As the pictures accumulate, the teacher will find it advisable to keep some pictures which do not fit readily into the checklist pattern. Such other file divisions may include illustrations for specific stories, illustrations of common expressions, and so on.

Many of these pictures may be cut from magazines. It has been found that magazines which carry a lot of advertising,

which appeals through what is common to many, are a better source of material than picture magazines which portray the extraordinary and unusual.

Some of these pictures may be mounted for display on class bulletin boards. Others may be passed around during class. A series of pictures on one topic is effective if mounted on loose-leaf pages and enclosed in a ring binder. Such a collection should be left available in the library or the department reading room so that students can look at it out of class. During class time the individual pages could be taken out and mounted on the board or used in some other manner by the teacher and students.

A dictionary will also be an aid to students studying literature as experience. The students must be warned not to expect the first definition of a word to fit the context in which it appears in the story, but a dictionary is fairly safe on the comprehension level.

Class

The section under this heading gives general directions for the conduct of the class. Discussion topics are presented, and the possible points which the discussion will bring out are listed. Some directions are given for the use of pictures and other things noted under the section on materials.

Some of the short stories cover only a few of the patterns on the checklist, and in the discussion the teacher would bring nearly every one of these points to the attention of the class. Other stories cover many points, and the teacher will have to select those he wishes to have the class discuss. Such selection will depend on the teacher's inclination, the interest of the class, and the areas covered by other stories which have been or will be taught.

Some sections call for comparison with patterns in the same area of the students' culture. This must be done very carefully. The object is to teach that differences in the experiences in the two countries result in different meanings. On no condi-

tion can such comparisons be on a basis of value. The comparisons are not to show that one culture is better than the other, but only that the cultures are different.

Written Work

The assignments for written work show a few of the types of exercises which the students can be asked to do in connection with their reading. These exercises will supplement the class work by making the students look to their reading to find the experiences which give words meanings, and they also provide the students opportunities for practice in doing so without the immediate supervision of the teacher.

LESSON I

Martha Foley, "One with Shakespeare"

Checklist Coverage

"One with Shakespeare" contains situations which illustrate the following patterns and experiences in the checklist:

I. A. Developing maximum potentialities of the individual
   2. Climbing the ladder of success
   4. Taking the initiative
   B. Equalizing opportunities for all
   6. Cooperating with the group

II. A. 4. b. At what times meals are eaten
   c. What is eaten
   B. 1. d. Conventions of cleanliness
   2. Non-residential buildings
   C. 2. Women's clothing
   D. Transportation
   1. b. Subways and busses
   3. Frequency of travel

III. A. 1. b. iii. Parent-child relations
c. i. Relation of children to adult world
ii. Formulas of address
iii. Relation to other children
vi. School experiences
vii. Stories for children
d. i. Adolescence a time of stress and revolt
2. a. iv. Professional groups
b. Race and nationality groups
3. d. Metropolitan centers
4. a. i. Enjoying the out-of-doors
c. i. Reading
5. b. Casual meeting
e. Greetings and leave takings
B. 3. a. Types of work
b. Preparation for work
C. 2. a. Major political parties
b. Position of liberals and radicals
D. 2. Secondary schools
a. Teachers
c. Subjects studied
3. Higher education
IV. B. 1. Ways of showing emotion
F. Esthetic values

Assignment

The teacher gives the assignment to the class as follows:

We are going to read a story called "One with Shakespeare" by Martha Foley. It is a story about a high school girl named Elizabeth in the city of Boston in the United States.

Elizabeth was absent from school because she was sick, and the English teacher asked her to write a theme to make up for the class she missed. Elizabeth writes about some immigrants, some people coming to the United States from Europe, landing at the dock in Boston after crossing the Atlantic Ocean.

(These places should be located on a map.) When the story starts, Elizabeth is taking her theme to the English teacher before classes start. The English teacher likes the theme and says that Elizabeth should become a writer because she has a "spark of the divine fire."

Such praise makes Elizabeth think of herself as a great writer—"one with Shakespeare" and other famous writers. The praise from her English teacher influences her thoughts and actions for the rest of the day.

Some parts of the story tell about action, the things that Elizabeth, her teachers, and her friends do. Some parts tell of Elizabeth's thoughts, the things she would like to do or say or write. The way to tell when Elizabeth is thinking and when she is talking is to look for quotation marks. In this story the parts actually spoken out loud are in quotation marks. (Write example on board: "I am going to be a great writer.") If Elizabeth only thinks these words, they are printed without quotation marks. (Write example: I am going to be a great writer.) In a few places quotation marks enclose lines of poetry by famous poets.

While you are reading, try to think of this story as a school experience. Have you had a similar experience yourself? Is the school in the story like your school? How was your school different from Elizabeth's? What points in the story show that Elizabeth believes she will have a chance to develop her abilities to the greatest possible extent?

Materials

Pictures of schools will help the students visualize the school experiences described in the story. If possible, the pictures should show city high schools, classrooms, a school library, and high school girls. Pictures of immigrants, the Boston waterfront, and the Charles River would also help. A map of the world or of the Western Hemisphere will help with making the assignment.

The school. The teacher shows students pictures of school buildings and points out special features, such as height, size, architecture, and playground facilities. He next shows pictures of classrooms, and the students discuss what they see in them. Comparisons should be made with the classroom they are then using.

The teacher mentions the reference in the story to "the IIIA classroom." He asks the students if each class had a home room in their own middle schools, and if some are not familiar with the system, he has other students describe it. He asks what other rooms Elizabeth goes to. Among the answers given by the class will be:

The English room
The Greek room
The library

The teacher points out that Elizabeth has to ask permission to go to the library during her study period. He tells the students that in most American high schools this class of Elizabeth's would be called the Tenth Grade (or 10A or High Ten). He gets the students to determine which class that is according to the system of numbering in their country, and how old Elizabeth is.

Next the teacher leads the discussion to the courses which Elizabeth studies. The students will mention:

English	Greek
Physics	Latin
Math (Geometry)	Ancient History

The teacher would mention the fact that very few students today study Greek, and that Latin is studied chiefly by students preparing to go to college. Elizabeth's class schedule should be compared with one in the students' secondary schools.

The teacher next asks what the students have learned about Elizabeth's teachers. The answers would include the following:

Her teachers are both men and women.

Her English teacher is a woman and her mathematics and physics teachers are men.

In general she dislikes her teachers, but she greatly appreciates Miss Cox.

Miss Cox makes her love the literature she reads, while her former English teacher made her count words in *Poor Richard.*

Elizabeth imagines saying several saucy things to Miss Perry, her Greek teacher, but actually does nothing but make a poor recitation.

When Miss Cox says, "My dear," to Elizabeth, the girl is filled with happiness.

Elizabeth quietly says, "Thank you," when she leaves Miss Cox, and later she walks very slowly past her door in hopes of seeing Miss Cox again.

The teacher points out that Elizabeth gets A marks in English. He asks whether this is good or bad. Then he asks what a poor mark would be. A student answers:

Elizabeth got E in geometry, which was very poor.

The teacher explains that an F means failure, and that many schools do not use the E mark, just A, B, C, D, and F. The teacher asks his students how often they got reports on their marks. Elizabeth gets monthly report cards.

The teacher asks how many pupils at the school are mentioned. The class will mention:

Eileen and Ruth.

The teacher explains that in this story the relation of Elizabeth with her teachers is stressed to the exclusion of her relation to other pupils. The other two girls, he points out, are introduced only after classes are over for the day. The teacher asks why the author does not mention other students, and he gets answers like the following:

Elizabeth feels that she is set apart from the other students because she is going to be a writer.

Ruth and Eileen have similar interests, so Elizabeth walks home with them instead of with other girls.

This is a special day for Elizabeth. She is thinking about her future. At other times these girls pay attention to other members of the class, as is shown by worry over getting a new dress for a class party.

The teacher can point out that while students are at high school they think about their vocations.

Out of school. The teacher points out that the fares the girls save by walking home would pay for rides on a streetcar or bus. He starts more class discussion by asking: How far from school do the girls live? How often do they walk? What do they do with the money they save? Among the answers the students will give are the following:

Since the girls can easily walk home, they do not live far from school.

When they walk they even make the journey longer by going to look at the river.

Riding is a bit of a luxury.

The way in which the girls discuss the spending of money they save by walking shows that they often do this.

First they want to eat sundaes. (The teacher explains that a sundae is ice cream with fruit or syrup poured over it, and that it is a favorite between-meal food.)

Then they decide to eat frosted doughnuts and bananas. (The teacher might go into details to describe doughnuts and their place in our eating habits.)

The teacher tells the class that this story takes place in spring, and asks them what effects the season has on the three girls. A few of the answers will be:

It has made them aware of nature.

They spend the afternoon after school on the Charles River esplanade enjoying the out-of-doors.

While still in school, Elizabeth spends her time looking out the windows at the trees.

The sunset, the new moon, and the city lights also attract the interest and admiration of these three girls.

The city of Boston is also conducting a Spring Clean-Up Week, and so the girls are careful to put their banana peels in a trash can.

The teacher points out that spring is traditionally a time for carrying out thorough cleanings of houses and cities. He asks his students how many of the above points would be true in their country for a school girl in spring.

The teacher asks the class what Elizabeth's mother thinks of her writing ability. They answer:

Elizabeth's mother still considers Elizabeth a little girl.

She asks whether Elizabeth got ink on her petticoat.

She thinks of good writing as only another A in English.

When Elizabeth says that she is going to be a writer her mother reminds her that she will still have to go to school some more and then go to college, and that she must learn to do her mathematics better.

The teacher explains that in American culture the adolescent period is considered a time of revolt against authority, and this pattern is demonstrated in the conversation of Elizabeth with her mother.

Individualism. The teacher asks what points in the story illustrate the way in which the maximum potentialities of an individual are developed. Among the answers will be:

Elizabeth chooses her own profession.

Her teacher encourages her in this line.

Her teacher lets her choose her own theme subject.

Her parents send her to school.

They expect to send her to college.

She can choose whether she rides home in the streetcar or walks home and saves the fare.

Written Work

Have the students divide a page into two columns. In the

left column they list the courses Elizabeth studies in her school in Boston. In the right column they list corresponding courses which they studied in the same year of school. Example:

Elizabeth's School	Student's School
English	Native language
Geometry	_____

LESSON II

Michale Fessler, "That's What Happened to Me"

CHECKLIST COVERAGE

I. A. Developing maximum potentialities of the individual
1. Acquiring pecuniary power
2. Climbing the ladder of success
3. Seeking adventure
4. Taking the initiative
5. Competing with others

B. Equalizing opportunities for all
2. Seeking social equality

II. B. 1. Dwellings
d. Conventions of cleanliness
2. Non-residential buildings

C. 1. Men's clothing
4. Formal and informal clothing

D. 1. a. Cars and taxis

III. A. 1. c. i. Relation of children to adult world
iii. Relation to other children
iv. Forms and spirit of play
v. Stress on physical skills
vi. School experiences
d. i. Adolescence a time of stress and revolt
e. ii. Adolescent social relations

2. a. Class levels
iii. Laborers
iv. Professional groups
vi. Consciousness of class levels
b. i. Social position of cultural groups
d. ii. Fraternal orders
3. b. Small towns
4. a. ii. Participating in sports
iv. Dancing and social games
b. i. Watching sports events
5. a. Language formulas in stores
f. Shaking hands

B. 1. a. Means of acquisition
2. b. Position of business leaders
3. a. Types of work
i. Work for adolescents
d. i. Attitude toward pay
ii. Attitude toward advancement

C. 1. Democracy

D. 2. Secondary schools
a. Teachers
b. Coeducation
c. Subjects studied
d. Social life at school

IV. A. 1. Sanctity of the individual
2. Leveling and cooperation

B. 1. Ways of showing emotion
2. Times of showing emotion

E. 2. Attitude toward profanity

ASSIGNMENT

The teacher says to the class:

The story, "That's What Happened to Me," by Michael Fessier is about a boy with a strong imagination. After school

every day he has to go to work at a drugstore while his classmates go out to practice for the athletic teams. While he is working, he thinks of what a hero he could be on the football, baseball, and track teams.

The story is told as if the boy Bottles Barton had written it himself. The first four pages tell what happens to Bottles at school and at the drugstore, but then the story about the track meet is completely imaginary. While Bottles is sweeping up the drugstore, he dreams of being a great jumper. He begins and ends his story by saying that nobody knows about it, and that is because it never really happened.

Some facts about himself are not mentioned by Bottles. He probably comes from a poor family, because he has to work after school while others play. Also he mentions the fact that his clothes are not very good and that the doctor's daughter looks down on him. He is probably small and awkward, because the other pupils find it easy to make fun of him.

This might be called a "tall story," because his jumping feats, not to mention his social success, are impossible. Tall stories form a type of American humor.

As you read the story, remember that this is another description of high school life and try to compare it with events at your own secondary school. Were there track meets with other schools? Were the good athletes looked up to by the other pupils? Did some of the small boys dream of being good jumpers and runners? Did the pupils give each other nicknames? In what ways do the individuals in the story compete against each other? In what ways does Bottles want to be like his classmates?

Materials

Pictures of a track meet, of football, of baseball. Pictures of a drugstore and the many products sold in such a store would also be useful.

Class

The teacher could begin the class by asking how the picture of an American high school in this story differs from the picture in "One with Shakespeare." Possible suggestions might be:

Michael Fessier describes:
- boys
- out-of-class activities
- coeducational school
- relations with other pupils
- boy who has to work
- class in salesmanship

Martha Foley describes:
- girls
- activities connected with class
- girls school
- relations with teachers
- girl with extra carfare
- classes in Greek, Latin, etc.

The teacher writes the suggestions on the board, so that they can be used as points of departure for further discussion of the story. It would not be necessary to follow the order of the suggestions though that would be a possible plan. A suggested plan follows.

The school. The teacher points out that these two stories emphasize different phases of school life. He asks the class what phases of school life are described in "That's What Happened to Me." They answer:

The story deals chiefly with sports and other out-of-class activities.

Bottles Barton looks with envy at the boys who can spend the afternoon practicing for a team.

His heroes are football and baseball players.

The other boys do not even let him talk with them about sports events.

Bottles dreams that if he could take part in some sport he would be accepted by the other boys and girls.

In his imagination he wins football and baseball games.

With superhuman feats he wins the track meet.

The teacher points out that Bottles considers sports the most important part of his school life and that Bottles only mentions one of the subjects he studies. This subject, salesmanship, would not fit in with the courses which Elizabeth in "One with Shakespeare" studies. The teacher explains that Bottles is not following the classical college preparatory curriculum, but is probably studying a commercial course. The teacher asks how many teachers Bottles mentions and what he thinks of them. The answers are:

The only teacher Bottles mentions is the coach, the director of athletics.

In his imagination Bottles hears the coach swear at him when he comes to the track meet, but Bottles would be pleased to win the approval of the coach.

The teacher would next take up the facts concerning the relations of Bottles with his classmates. The discussion will bring out the following points:

Bottles' school, Brinkley High School, is evidently a public high school, with both boys and girls as pupils.

When the boys get together to talk, Bottles is "sort of an outsider listening."

Bottles looks up to Anna Louise, but she always laughs at him.

Once this makes him so mad that he starts to fight with a boy much bigger than he.

When he imagines that he has won the high jump and pole vault, he thinks that he makes Anna Louise jealous by talking to two other girls.

He also dreams that after his imaginary victory he is invited to some dances.

He imagines that he refuses to go to a frat dance, be-

cause he thinks that fraternities are undemocratic. (The teacher gives a short description of a high school fraternity.)

This shows that he has not been invited to join any of the fraternities at the high school.

The greatest triumph in his relations with other pupils comes in his imagination when the whole school parades him around the track after his jumping victory.

Out of school. The teacher asks what Bottles Barton does after school. The answer is:

Bottles has to wash bottles and sweep out the Patch's drugstore.

The teacher asks the class to compare such work with the way Elizabeth spends her afternoon in Martha Foley's story. The teacher asks whether Bottles is rich or poor, getting the following answers:

Bottles does not mention his home, but his parents are evidently so poor that he has to work to help support the family.

His clothes are not very good, which also indicates that his family is poor.

The teacher shows pictures of drugstores and names some of the various products which are sold there. The discussion which follows covers these points:

The Patch's drugstore is probably small, because Bottles is the only person hired to help in the store.

When Bottles speaks of "old man Patch" and "old lady Patch," he shows a lack of respect for them.

He thinks of them as a bit old fashioned and could tell them some ways to give better service.

The teacher leads the discussion to consider the effects of Bottles' present work on his future plans. The class will bring out the following facts:

Bottles is not discouraged by the fact that he is poor

and has to work so hard now, because he plans a better future for himself.

He wants to have a drugstore of his own and he hopes to have lots of money and twenty suits.

In his imagination after the victory at the track meet he plans to improve his position by getting work at a better drugstore.

By going to school and working hard, Bottles hopes to succeed in life.

The teacher shows that this fits in with the American ideal of climbing the ladder of success.

Written Work

Have the students write a short paragraph explaining whether a boy in their country would consider a track meet more important or less important than Bottles Barton does.

EXTENSION TO OTHER MATERIALS

After the initial lessons have set the pattern, the teacher can make his own plans which will suit his students and his materials. Thus he can make the necessary adjustments to interest, reading ability, and the scope of the course. Extension along the line of more short stories could include some of the following:

Elsie Singmaster, "Mr. Brownlee's Roses"
A high school girl finds her vocation. The setting is a small town in Pennsylvania.

Mary E. Wilkins Freeman, "The Revolt of 'Mother' "
Family life on a New England farm. An excellent story for providing the rural context.

Peter De Vries, "A Cold Potato"
A suburban couple discuss family relations.

James Thurber, "Snapshot of a Dog"
A dog and his place in a family with three boys.

Joseph Husband, "Semaphore"

A reporter rides in the cab of a locomotive and learns respect and trust for the keepers of the semaphores.

Theodore Dreiser, "A Mayor and His People"

A mayor elected on a socialist ticket effects some reforms, but the railroad company eventually gets someone else elected. Among the patterns the story illustrates are the struggle between individualism and social forces, class levels, economic structure, and political structure.

Helen Eustis, "The Good Days and the Bad"

A lady piano teacher from the South meets a violin teacher, an Italian man, in Cincinnati. Among the experiences the story illustrates are intercultural conflicts, the place of music, teaching, women living alone, man-woman relations, soda fountain refershments, drinks, clothes, and manners.

Ethel Edison Gordon, "War Front: Louisiana"

A girl follows her army husband to the South. In addition to husband-wife relations, the story also describes climate, leisure time, bathing, food, Negroes, a small town, a railroad, cars, fishing, swimming, phone conversation, and clothes.

Catherine Hubbell, "Monday at Six."

A lonely Argentine teaches Spanish in New York City. The story describes American women's relations with men, the loneliness of the city, and stores and restaurants of New York.

Henry B. Lent, *Flight 17*

A story of a flight from New York to Chicago, with a description of the airport at New York.

Jessie Treichler, "Homecoming"

A family settling in Montana in 1908. This is not a story of current life, but it does show the spirit of migration which is a common background pattern in our American culture. It also describes experiences in railroad travel, new towns, types of work and training for work, farm life,

climbing the ladder of success, friendliness, setting up a home, conventions of cleanliness, cooking, and songs.

After beginning with short stories, the teacher will want his class to advance to reading novels. The selection of the novels should be on the same basis as the selection of the short stories. The amount of checklist coverage will be much greater, so that the experiences which reveal cultural patterns in the novels should be located by page numbers. Readability should be checked. Lorge recommends checking 5 to 10 percent of the words, the samples being chosen throughout the book.[1]

The experiences in American patterns will be much more complete and more fully described in the novels than in the short stories, but no novel will completely cover the American culture. If the novel is selected in advance, the short stories can at least in part be chosen to fill in the omissions in checklist coverage in the novel. Careful selection will enable the teacher to make lesson plans which give an adequate presentation of the subject and also avoid duplication.

[1] Irving Lorge, "Predicting Readability," Teachers College Record, 45:6 (March 1944), p. 409.

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APPENDIX A

EXCERPTS FROM THE REPORT ON A TEST OF READABILITY

The passages used in the test follow. The author, title, publisher, page reference, and readability index (R.I.) are given here, but they were not included on the test sheets. A set of arbitrary signs (/ /, †, [ ], *, and =) was used to distinguish the passages.

/ /

Thomas Hardy, *Under the Greenwood Tree* (London: Dent, 1926), p. 118, Line 14. R.I. 5.4

"Ye never find out what's in that man: never. Silent? Ah, he is silent! He can keep silent well. That man's silence is wonderful to listen to."

"There's so much sense in it. Every moment of it is brimming over with sound understanding."

" 'A can keep a very clever silence—very clever truly," echoed Leaf. " 'A looks at me as if 'a could see my thought running round like the works of a clock."

"Well, all will agree that the man can pause well in conversation, be it a long time or be it a short time. And though we can't expect his daughter to inherit his silence, she may have a few dribblets from his sense."

"And his pocket, perhaps."

"Yes; the nine hundred pound that everybody says he's worth; but I call it four hundred and fifty; for I never believe more than half I hear."

†

Jane Austen, *Pride and Prejudice* (Universal Library; New York: Grosset & Dunlap, n.d.), p. 251, Line 23 to page 252, Line 4. R.I. 6.4

"How very ill Eliza Bennet looks this morning, Mr. Darcy," Miss Bingley cried; "I never in my life saw any one so much altered as she is since the winter. She is grown so brown and coarse! Louisa and I were agreeing that we should not have known her again."

However little Mr. Darcy might have liked such an address, he contented himself with cooly replying that he perceived no other alteration than her being rather tanned,—no miraculous consequence of traveling in the summer.

"For my own part," she rejoined, "I must confess that I never could see any beauty in her. Her face is too thin; her complexion has no brilliance; and her features are not at all handsome. Her nose wants character—there is nothing marked in its lines. Her teeth are tolerable, but not out of the common way; and as for her eyes, which have sometimes been called fine, I never could perceive anything extraordinary in them."

[ ]

Charles Dickens, *David Copperfield* (Universal Library; New York: Grosset & Dunlap, n.d.), p. 60, Lines 12 to 24. R.I. 6.8

I had often admired, as I have elsewhere described, the Doctor's benignant manner towards his youthful wife; but the respectful tenderness he manifested in every reference to her on this occasion, and the almost reverential manner in which he put away from him the slightest doubt of her integrity, exalted him, in my eyes, beyond description.

"I married that lady," said the Doctor, "when she was

extremely young. I took her to myself when her character was scarcely formed. So far as it was developed, it had been my happiness to form it. I knew her father well. I knew her well. I had taught her what I could, for the love of all her beautiful and virtuous qualities. If I did her wrong, as I fear I did, in taking advantage (but I never meant it) of her gratitude and her affection; I ask pardon of that lady, in my heart!"

•

Charles Dickens, *Oliver Twist* (Philadelphia: MacRae-Smith, n.d.), p. 176, Lines 16 to 30. R.I. 7.7

The kitchen was an old, low-roofed room; with a great beam across the middle of the ceiling, and benches, with high backs to them, by the fire; on which were seated several rough men in smock-frocks, drinking and smoking. They took no notice of Oliver; and very little of Sikes; and, as Sikes took very little notice of them, he and his young comrade sat in a corner by themselves, without being much troubled by their company.

They had some cold meat for dinner, and sat so long after it, while Mr. Sikes indulged himself with three or four pipes, that Oliver began to feel quite certain they were not going any further. Being much tired with the walk, and getting up so early, he dozed a little at first; then, quite overpowered by fatigue and the fumes of the tobacco, fell asleep.

=

Charles Dickens, *David Copperfield* (Universal Library; New York: Grosset & Dunlap, n.d.), p. 714, Lines 18 to 32. R.I. 8.8

I really had some fear of Mr. Micawber's dying on the spot. The manner in which he struggled through these inarticulate sentences, and whenever he found himself getting near the name of Heep, fought his way on to it, dashed at it in a fainting state, and brought it out with a vehemence little less than marvelous,

was frightful; but now, when he sank into a chair, steaming, and looked at us, with every possible color in his face that had no business there, and an endless procession of lumps following one another in hot haste up his throat, whence they seemed to shoot into his forehead, he had the appearance of being in the last extremity. I would have gone to his assistance, but he waved me off, and wouldn't hear a word.

"No, Copperfield! – No communication – a – until Miss Wickfield – a – redress from wrongs inflicted by consummate scoundrel – HEEP!"

The directions and score sheet were printed together on a sixth slip of paper as illustrated below:

Readability Grading

DIRECTIONS

Read each of the five passages carefully. Then arrange the sheets in the order of their difficulty, with the easiest to read on top and the most difficult at the bottom. Each of the sheets is marked with a symbol. Please record these symbols on the scale below. Also please indicate your native language in the space provided.

Easiest to read: 1. _____
2. _____
3. _____ Native language _____
4. _____
Most difficult: 5. _____

The table which follows indicates the order in which the whole group of 95 students rated the five passages, and also the order in which the various language groups rated the passages.

The average of the ratings given to each passage is given below the number which indicates the order of difficulty.

	/ /	†	[ ]	*	=
All 95 persons	4	3	2	1	5
	3.5	2.5	2.4	2.2	4.3
11 native speakers of English	4	1	3	1	5
	3.7	2.0	3.3	2.0	4.0
84 non-native speakers of English	4	3	2	1	5
	3.5	2.5	2.4	2.3	4.3
14 native speakers of Chinese	4	2	3	1	5
	3.4	2.7	2.8	2.1	3.9
34 native speakers of Spanish	4	3	1	2	5
	3.9	2.6	2.2	2.3	4.5
36 native speakers of other	4	3	2	1	5
	3.4	2.5	2.4	2.4	4.3

APPENDIX B

RECORDS OF READABILITY COUNTS

Foley, Martha

"One with Shakespeare" in Emma L. Reppert, *Modern Short Stories* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1933), pp. 57-68.

Location of pages sampled	61	65	Total	Ratio
No. of words in passage	307	319	626	
No. of different hard words	53	49	102	.163
No. of structural variations	25	31	56	.088
No. of words in dialog	56	86	142	.227

Dialect scale (1) 2 3 4 5
None Much

Fessier, Michael

"That's What Happened to Me" in Emma L. Reppert, *Modern Short Stories* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1939), pp. 218-228.

Location of pages sampled	221	225	Total	Ratio
No. of words in passage	381	284	665	
No. of different hard words	47	44	91	.137
No. of structural variations	28	35	63	.095
No. of words in dialog	49	83	132	.198

Dialect scale 1 (2) 3 4 5
None Much

Singmaster, Elsie

"Mr. Brownlee's Roses" in Edith Mirrielees, *Twenty-two Short Stories of America* (New York: Heath, 1937), pp. 319-333.

Location of pages sampled	324	328	Total	Ratio
No. of words in passage	273	236	509	
No. of different hard words	55	34	89	.175
No. of structural variations	16	26	42	.083
No. of words in dialog	28	189	217	.427

Dialect scale 1 (2) 3 4 5
None Much

Freeman, Mary E. Wilkins

"The Revolt of 'Mother' " in Rosa Mikels, *Short Stories for English Courses* (New York: Scribner's, 1920), pp. 259-281.

Location of pages sampled	266	272	278	Total	Ratio
No. of words in passage	282	302	303	887	
No. of different hard words	56	53	76	185	.208
No. of structural variations	17	22	19	58	.065
No. of words in dialog	48	162	86	296	.333

Dialect scale 1 2 (3) 4 5
None Much

De Vries, Peter

"A Cold Potato" in Orville Prescott, *Mid-Century* (New York: Washington Square, 1958), pp. 281-288.

Location of pages sampled	282	286	Total	Ratio
No. of words in passage	334	435	769	
No. of different hard words	78	81	159	.207
No. of structural variations	12	23	35	.046
No. of words in dialog	68	33	101	.131

Dialect scale (1) 2 3 4 5
None Much

APPENDIX C

THE DALE LIST OF 769 EASY WORDS

A
a
about
above
across
act
afraid
after
afternoon
again
against
ago
air
all
almost
alone
along
already
also
always
am
American
an
and
animal
another
answer
any
anything
apple
are
arm
around
as
ask
at
away

B
baby
back
bad
bag
ball
band
bank
basket
be
bear
beat
beautiful
because
bed
bee
been
before
began
begin
behind
being
believe
bell
belong
beside
best
better
between
big
bill
bird
bit
black
bless
blind
blood
blow
blue
board
boat
body
bone
book
born
both
bottom
bow
box
boy
branch
brave
bread
break
breakfast
bridge
bright
bring
broken
brother
brought
brown
build
building
built
burn
busy
but
butter
buy
by

C
cake
call
came
can
cap
captain
car
care
careful
carry
case
catch
cause
cent
center
chair
chance

change
chief
child
children
choose
Christmas
church
circle
city
class
clean
clear
clock
close
cloth
clothes
cloud
coal
coat
cold
color
come
coming
company
cook
cool
corn
corner
cost
could
count
country
course
cover
cow
cried
cross
crowd
crown
cry
cup
cut

D

dance
dark
day
dead
dear
deep
did
die
different
dinner
do
doctor
does
dog
done
don't
door
double
down
draw
dream
dress
drink
drive
drop
dry
dust

E

each
ear
early
earth
east
easy
eat
edge
egg
eight
either
else
end
England
English
enough
even
evening
ever
every
everything
except
expect
eye

F

face
fair
fall
family
fancy
far
farm
farmer
fast
fat
father
feed
feel
feet
fell
fellow
felt
fence
few
field
fight
fill
find
fine
finger
finish
fire
first
fish
fit
five
fix
floor
flower
fly
follow
food
foot
for
forget
fourth
found
four
fresh
friend
from
front
fruit
full

G

game
garden
gate
gave
get
gift
girl
give
glad
glass
go
God
going
gold
golden
gone
good
got
grain
grass
gray
great
green
grew
ground
grow
guess

H

had
hair
half
hall
hand
hang
happy
hard
has
hat
have

he
head
hear
heard
heart
heavy
help
her
here
herself
hide
high
hill
him
himself
his
hold
hole
home
hope
horse
hot
house
how
hundred
hunt
hurry
hurt

I
ice
if
in
Indian
instead
into
iron

is
it
its

J
jump
just

K
keep
kept
kill
kind
king
kiss
knee
knew
know

L
lady
laid
lake
land
large
last
late
laugh
lay
lead
learn
leave
left
leg
lesson
let

letter
lie
lift
light
like
line
lion
lips
listen
little
live
load
long
look
lost
lot
loud
love
low

M
made
mail
make
man
many
march
mark
market
matter
may
me
mean
measure
meat
meet
men
met

middle
might
mile
milk
mill
mind
mine
minute
miss
money
month
moon
more
morning
most
mother
mountain
mouth
move
Mr.
Mrs.
much
music
must
my
myself

N
name
near
neck
need
neighbor
neither
nest
never
new
New York

next
nice
night
nine
no
noise
none
noon
nor
north
nose
not
note
nothing
now
number

O
oak
ocean
of
off
office
often
old
on
once
one
only
open
or
other
our
out
outside
over
own

P
page
paint
pair
paper
part
party
pass
path
pay
pen
people
pick
picture
piece
place
plain
plant
play
please
point
poor
post
pound
present
press
pretty
pull
put

Q
quarter
queen
quick
quiet
quite

R
race
rain
ran
rather
reach
read
ready
real
reason
red
remember
rest
rich
ride
right
ring
river
road
rock
roll
roof
room
rose
round
row
run

S
said
sail
salt
same
sand
sat
save
saw
say
school
sea
season
seat
second
see
seed
seem
seen
self
sell
send
sent
serve
set
seven
several
shake
shall
shape
she
sheep
shine
ship
shoe
shop
short
should
shoulder
show
shut
sick
side
sign
silk
silver
sing
sir
sister
sit
six
size
skin
sky
sleep
slow
small
smile
smoke
snow
so
soft
sold
soldier
some
something
sometime
song
soon
sound
south
space
speak
spot
spread
spring
square
stand
star
start
station
stay
step
stick
still
stone
stood
stop
store
storm
story
straight
street
strike
strong
such
sugar
suit
summer
sun
suppose
sure
surprise
sweet

T
table
tail
take
talk
tall
taste
teach
teacher
tear
tell
ten
than
thank
that
the
their
them
then
there
these

they
thick
thin
thing
think
this
those
though
thought
thousand
three
through
throw
tie
till
time
tire(d)
to
today
together
told
tomorrow
tongue
too
took
top
touch
town
trade
train
tree
true
try
turn
twelve
twenty
two

U

uncle
under
until
up
upon
us
use

V

valley
very
visit

W

wait
walk
wall
want
war
warn
was
wash
waste
watch
water
wave
way
we
wear
weather
week
well
went
were
west
what
wheat
wheel
when
where
whether
which
while
white
who
whole
whom
whose
why
wide
wild
will
win
wind
window
wing
winter
wish
with
without
woman
wonder
wood
word
work
world
would
write
wrong

Y

yard
year
yellow
yes
yesterday
yet
you
young
your

[1] Edgar Dale, "A Comparison of Two Word Lists," *Educational Research Bulletin*, 10:18 (Dec. 9, 1931), pp. 484-489.